

# **City of Lawton Guidelines for Places of Worship**

Places of worship may reopen for in-person meetings or worship beginning May 1, 2020, if they adhere to CDC recommended social distancing and sanitation protocols and the additional guidance and requirements listed herein.

The State of Oklahoma's Employer Guidance for Oklahoma's Open Up and Recover Safely Plan for Places of Worship scheduled to take effect on May 1, 2020, are hereby adopted, except as modified herein. It is expressly provided that in all cases of conflict between provisions of the City of Lawton and those provisions included in the Order of the Governor, as thereafter amended, the more safe/restrictive shall apply.

**Please note that these are the minimum requirements at this time; places of worship may implement other safety protocol and procedures to support these requirements. It should also be noted that all required safety measures and given requirements must be in place at the time of opening. Whenever the wearing of a face covering is required by these guidelines, such requirement shall not apply to individuals with a documented medical condition that contraindicates such use.**

## **Recommended Guidelines for Temperature Checks & Employer Policies**

Places of Worship shall use a touchless infrared thermometer to check the temperature of employees and volunteers each day. Employees and/or volunteers with a temperature above 100.4°F shall be sent home until they have no fever and no evidence of COVID-19 symptoms. Places of Worship should consider supportive policies and practices for allowing employees and volunteers older than 65 years or in other vulnerable populations to stay at home.

## **Protect Your Vulnerable Members**

Persons 65 years and older and all those with medical conditions that place them in the "high risk" category should continue to maintain the "Shelter at Home" CDC/State/City guidelines, as per the Governor's Emergency Order. However, if members of this COVID-19 vulnerable population attend faith-based services, they should strongly consider attending a special service designated for that group and wearing face coverings at all times.

## **The Offering**

Online or mailed giving should be encouraged. On-site offerings shall be collected at central locations, preferably as visitors are entering or exiting the service. Trays or baskets shall not be passed from person to person and direct contact is not permitted between the offering attendant and those providing the gift.

## **Bibles/Hymnals/Handouts**

All bibles, hymnals and other common use materials provided by the place of worship must be removed from the service area. Worshipers and guest may bring their personal bibles and hymnals with them to the service. When utilizing written communication/handouts, etc., elements should be distributed at central locations. Church staff members assisting with this process shall wear gloves and a face

covering and ensure social distancing requirements are maintained. Worshipers should be encouraged to take all such materials with them as they leave the service.

### **Sanitation & Disinfecting Guidelines**

1. Ensure that your entire place of worship is properly cleaned and sanitized. Sanitize pews, bathrooms, doorknobs, light switches, microphones, common musical instruments, and any other areas where germs might be transferred.
2. Prior to reopening, retrain employees on best practices to avoid contamination.
3. Sanitize between services, particularly high-touch surfaces.
4. Clean and disinfect bathrooms regularly and ensure they have handwashing supplies.
5. Provide strategically placed hand sanitizers for employees, volunteers, and guests.

### **Maintain Social Distancing At All Times**

1. Recommend members abstain from shaking hands and encourage doing non-contact greetings.
2. The use of face covering is strongly recommended.
3. Encourage sick members to remain safe at home and avoid contact with others.
4. Consider continuing online services for those who are unable to attend in person.
5. If possible, offer multiple services to encourage a greater chance of social distancing.
6. During Phase 1 of the Open Safe and Recover Safely Plan, abstain from serving food or coffee before or after services.
7. During Phase 1 of the Open Safe and Recover Safely Plan, children's nursery should remain closed.
8. Non-fixed seating shall be set out to provide a minimum of six feet between chairs and six feet between rows. Fixed seating and pews shall be limited to the use of every other row and with family members from the same household sitting together and a minimum of six feet or three seats between such groups or other individuals within the same row or pew.
9. Any potential direct counseling of attendees by church staff shall require maintaining social distancing guidelines of a minimum of 6 feet, shall involve no direct contact, and shall require the wearing of a face covering.

### **Community Leadership**

The community is looking to you for leadership! It is therefore important that all pastoral staff, worship leaders, and choir provide this leadership by maintaining a minimum six-foot social distancing at all times. Choirs and worship leaders should perform in a single line rather than in rows. Face covering should be worn whenever practical. With your help we can safely and successfully navigate Phase I of the Open Safe and Recover Safely Plan and look forward to Phase II.